

**Blaby District Council  
Council**

<b>Date of Meeting</b>	28 January 2025
<b>Title of Report</b>	<b>Asset Disposals and Affordable Housing Site Update</b> This is not a Key Decision and is on the Forward Plan
<b>Lead Member</b>	<b>Cllr. Nigel Grundy - Neighbourhood Services &amp; Assets</b>
<b>Report Author</b>	Neighbourhood Services Group Manager
<b>Strategic Themes</b>	All Themes: Enabling communities and supporting vulnerable residents; Enhancing and maintaining our natural and built environment; Growing and supporting our economy; Keeping you safe and healthy; Ambitious and well managed Council, valuing our people

**1. What is this report about?**

- 1.1 To provide an update to Council on progress of disposal decisions made previously and to seek authority to dispose of assets surplus to the Council's requirements.

**2. Recommendation(s) to Council**

- 2.1 That delegated Authority is given to the Neighbourhood Services Group Manager in consultation with the Neighbourhood Services and Assets Portfolio Holder to dispose of the underutilised land at College Road, Whetstone to East Midlands Housing Group for a nominal fee.
- 2.2 That delegated Authority is given to the Executive Director (S151 Officer) in consultation with the Housing, Community Safety and Environmental Services Portfolio Holder to agree an affordable housing contribution to be made towards the College Road Site.
- 2.3 That delegated Authority is given to the Neighbourhood Services Group Manager in consultation with the Neighbourhood Services and Assets Portfolio Holder to dispose of:
- the underutilised land at High Street, Whetstone to Whetstone Parish Council for a disposal value of £137,500 and
  - Trinity Park Open Space, Whetstone for a nominal fee.
- 2.4 That delegated Authority is given to the Neighbourhood Services Group Manager in consultation with the Neighbourhood Services and Assets Portfolio Holder to dispose of Glen Hills Nature Area, Glen Parva to Glen Parva Parish Council for a nominal fee.

### **3. Reason for Decisions Recommended**

- 3.1 The recommendations seek to ensure that the Council utilises assets appropriately, assessing the future use to meet the Council's priority around affordable housing; to generate a monetary return or to pass open space to Parishes where it might be appropriate to do so and reducing maintenance costs and liability to the Council.
- 3.2 The recommendation at 2.2 will allow the level of affordable housing contributions to be agreed without further delay and assist the development of the two dementia friendly bungalows on the College Road site to be progressed.

### **4. Matters to consider**

#### **4.1 Background**

#### **Update of Asset Disposal and Affordable Housing Decision**

At the Council meeting of the 27<sup>th</sup> July 2021 Council considered the disposal of four pieces of land in its ownership. This followed an exercise that the Council had been carrying out to consider if any pieces of land may be developed to generate income or to provide affordable housing. Council considered the report and proposed that:

- Underutilised land off High Street, Whetstone, land at Station Road Glenfield and land at College Road Whetstone (Detailed at Appendix A) be disposed of to East Midlands Housing Group (EMH) for a sum of £205,002. This was contingent upon the sites being purchased together and subject to planning permission being given.
- That Open Space Land at Trinity Park, Whetstone (detailed at Appendix B) be disposed of to Whetstone Parish Council for a nominal fee. This transaction was on condition that the site be retained as open space in perpetuity and that the transaction should occur once the transfer of all three sites to EMH had been concluded.

Since the Council decision, EMH have progressed plans attempting to gain planning permission for the three sites. The College Road Site at Whetstone has been granted planning permission to build two dementia friendly bungalows however, at the Planning Committee of the 3<sup>rd</sup> October planning permission was refused for the Station Road, Glenfield site. The conditions of the original disposal decision can not now be met and an alternative recommendation is needed to address this.

## **Further Asset Disposal**

The District Council have recently developed a Parks and Open Strategy 2024- 2034 with a strategic vision to ensure that Blaby District Council owned parks and open spaces are sustainable, high quality, accessible and continue to provide value to people, place, and nature.

A key objective of the strategy is to review all strategic parks and open spaces owned by Blaby District Council and recommend the best ownership and management for their respective communities.

As part of this continuous review the Council have identified Glen Hills Nature Area to recommend for transfer to the respective local parish council. Further to an offer in principle to transfer land, Glen Parva Parish Council has expressed an interest in taking ownership.

Parish Councils have an in depth understanding of local needs, and the availability to access funding opportunities which has the potential to provide a vast range of benefits to its residents, visitors, and park users. In addition, it allows for the Parish Council to take control of the site offering opportunities for consistency in maintenance regimes, community events, activities, and much more.

### **4.2 Proposal(s)**

#### **Update of Asset Disposal and Affordable Housing Decision**

##### **College Road Site**

With the refusal of the planning application for Station Road in Glenfield and the land off High Street in Whetstone also proving difficult to address planning considerations, it is recommended that the transfer of the College Road, Whetstone site to EMH be made for a nominal fee without the transaction being conditional on the transfer of the Station Road and High Street Sites.

EMH are currently considering whether it is still viable to develop the College Road site without the inclusion of the land at High Street and Station Road however, it is proposed that Council approve the disposal of the College Road site to EMH for a nominal fee for the development of the dementia bungalows on the basis that EMH are able to progress the site at a point in the future. Delegated authority is requested to be given to the Executive Director in consultation with the Portfolio Holder to agree to an affordable housing contribution from funds already held by the Council from developer contributions. This contribution will be kept within usual contribution levels and will enable the development to progress without delay if EMH are able to make the site viable.

### **Land off High Street in Whetstone**

Correspondence was received in August 2024 from solicitors acting on behalf of Whetstone Parish Council making an offer of £137,500 for the land off High Street. The offer is made to acquire the land freehold, without any planning permission and free from restrictions, given that market value is offered. It is the Parish Council's intention that the land be used as open space.

It is proposed that this land (detailed at appendix C) be disposed of to Whetstone Parish Council free from restrictions for the disposal value of £137,500.

### **Open Space at Trinity Park**

It is proposed, as per the original report, that the Open Space Land at Trinity Park, Whetstone be disposed of to Whetstone Parish Council for a nominal fee. This transaction was on condition that the site be retained as open space in perpetuity and Whetstone Parish Council have confirmed that they are happy to proceed on that basis.

### **Station Road Glenfield**

Following the refusal by the planning application for this site further options are currently being considered and will be brought back to Council for consideration at a later date.

### **Glen Hills Nature Area**

Glen Parva Parish Council has expressed an interest to take ownership of Glen Hills Nature Area LT251274, LT143642 and LT387622, (Plan Appendix C) which will remain as open space in perpetuity.

The land has received a valuation of £1,250 based on it being retained as open space. The site has been deemed not to have any development potential and it is unlikely that the land would obtain the valuation figure if advertised for sale. It is therefore proposed that the site be transferred to the parish to be retained as open space in perpetuity for a nominal value of £1.00.

The Council will be required to advertise the open space transferring to Parish Council's for sale by way of a Public Notice in a local newspaper in accordance with the Local Government Act 1972 s123 prior to transfer should Council accept the recommendations.

## **4.3 Relevant Consultations**

Consultation was undertaken during the development of the Parks & Open Strategy that subsequently identified the transfers of Glen Hills Nature Area as a Strategic Objective.

Internal consultants: Working group, Tourism, Planning, Environmental Services, SLT, Informal Cabinet, Scrutiny, Full Council.

External consultants: Leicestershire County Council, The Environmental Partnership (TEP) Parish/Town Councils.

4.4 Significant Issues  
None

4.5 In preparing this report, the author has considered issues related to Human Rights, Legal Matters, Human Resources, Equalities, Public Health Inequalities and there are no areas of concern. From an equalities point of view it is anticipated that there will be positive equality impacts as a result of the recommendations.

**5. Environmental impact**

- 5.1
- No Net Zero and Climate Impact Assessment (NZCIA) is required for this report. No adverse environmental impacts are anticipated given there is to be no change to the current utilisation of the land remaining as open space.
  - With regard to the proposal to construct new affordable homes by EMH at College Road, it is expected that measures will be taken to enhance thermal efficiency of buildings through improved insulation techniques, include solar panels and rain water harvesting and ecology measures for birds and insects.

**6. What will it cost and are there opportunities for savings?**

- 6.1 The transfer will have the potential to reduce operational costs to the Parks and Open Spaces Team at a de minimis level and free up time from the cessation of grounds maintenance obligations. The potential time saved would be absorbed within the service and directed towards undertaking more hard landscaping activities to reduce expenditure on external contractors.

Note that parts of Trinity Park are currently leased to Whetstone Parish Council and as such are maintained by Whetstone Parish.

	<b>Current year</b>	<b>2025/26</b>
<b>Revenue</b>	N/A	0
<b>Capital receipt</b>	N/A	£137,500
<b>Nominal receipts</b>		£2

## **7. What are the risks and how can they be reduced?**

### **7.1**

Current Risk	Actions to reduce the risks
Councils' liability for the sites	Transferring the asset to the Parish Council's will transfer the liability.
Risk that the Parish is unable to maintain the assets after transfer.	The Council will carry out due diligence to ensure the Parish Council's have the ability and funding to maintain the parks into the future.
Limited funding for improvements to the open spaces.	Transferring the asset will provide further funding avenues for future improvements to the sites.
Risk that development of College Road has now become unviable for EMH to develop given build costs escalating since initial decision	Officers are continuing to work with EMH to understand how this site could be brought forward for development.

## **8. Other options considered**

- 8.1 The option of continuing to maintain the Glen Hills Nature Area by the Council's in house team was considered and discounted based on the ongoing revenue costs of maintaining the site and lack of capital funding for any investment into the site. The option to undertake minimal maintenance on all sites was considered and discounted in favour of transferring to the parish council.

Opportunities to retain Glen Hills Nature Area for potential biodiversity net gain units has been explored and discounted as an early assessment has suggested it may be unviable.

For the open space recreation ground at Trinity Road (Whetstone) – the option to retain the land was considered. However, the disposal of the open space to the Parish would remove an ongoing liability. To note; in recent times the Parish have been maintaining this land informally.

For College Rd (Whetstone) – as per previous Council report in February 2020 the option to retain the land was considered. However, the proposed disposal will maximise the Council's priority to provide affordable housing and remove an ongoing maintenance liability.

**9. Appendix**

- 9.1 Appendix A – Appendix A – Red line drawings for Station Rd (Glenfield), High Street (Whetstone), College Road (Whetstone)
- 9.2 Appendix B – Appendix B – Red line drawing for open space Trinity Road (Whetstone)
- 9.3 Appendix C – Appendix C – Red line drawing for Glen Hills Nature Area

**10. Background paper(s)**

- 10.1 None

**11. Report author's contact details**

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